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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**HEALTH CHALLENGE KICKS OFF PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK CELEBRATION**  
*Spano & other officials compete against kids in obstacle course contest*  
*Board of Health presents "Distinguished Public Health Service" Award*

In recognition of National Public Health Week, County Executive Andy Spano, Health Commissioner Dr. Joshua Lipsman, Board of Health President Dr. Douglas Aspros, and municipal mayors, supervisors and Westchester County residents all gathered at The Westchester mall this morning to launch the county's newest "Be Fit" initiative and engage in fun activities that highlight the importance of physical activity.

To promote healthy living in all of Westchester's communities, Spano introduced the *Mayor's and Supervisor's Community Health Challenge*. So far 18 municipalities have agreed to create and implement activities and programs within their communities this spring that encourage residents to get fit and stay fit. From sponsoring organized walks and developing recreational grounds to launching bicycle programs and compiling healthy cookbooks, the participating municipalities are all doing their part to support the county's anti-obesity efforts.

County Executive Spano praised community leaders in the participating municipalities and John Chervokas, President of the Municipal Officials' Association, for their commitment to providing residents with ample opportunities to live healthy and eat healthy. "I know that many communities have been doing a great job in providing health and fitness programs, but we wanted to encourage more municipalities to get on board," said Spano. "That's why County Health Commissioner Josh Lipsman and I issued this challenge to the mayors and supervisors. The result so far has been very promising and I am hopeful that additional municipalities will join the challenge and do things to promote healthier lifestyles in their communities."

To demonstrate that physical fitness can be fun, the County Executive and some of the mayors and supervisors rolled up their sleeves and went head-to-head with boys and girls from Westchester County in an obstacle course challenge that included hula-hoop contests and jumping jacks.

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## Health Challenge Kick Off P.2

In honor of National Public Health Week, Commissioner of Health Dr. Joshua Lipsman took the time to recognize the great strides that the county and public health workers throughout Westchester have made in assisting residents with adopting good health habits. “A well-balanced diet and regular exercise are the foundation on which all healthy lifestyles are built,” he said. “Westchester County is a huge proponent of healthy living and under the leadership of County Executive Spano, the county has succeeded in fostering environments that encourage physical activity as well as healthy eating. We are also extremely grateful to the community partners who work tirelessly along side of us each day for the good of public health in Westchester.”

Following Dr. Lipsman’s remarks, Board of Health President, Douglas Aspros, D.V.M. presented the sixth annual Distinguished Public Health Service Award to Gregg Howells, Rye YMCA Executive Director for the organization’s Activate America Program. The award was established by the Board of Health to acknowledge the contributions made by organizations and individuals who promote public health in Westchester. The Rye YMCA Activate America Program, a community partnership coalition, was selected as this year’s recipient for its innovative approach to encouraging healthy lifestyles. Launched in December of 2005, the program has made significant strides in a short period of time. Some of its accomplishments to date include:

- Awarding \$1,000 grants to 15 Westchester schools to fund school wellness activities;
- Helping enroll 9 schools in the county’s *Fit Kids* program;
- Starting a *Walk Across America* program at recess time for school kids;
- Conducting a *Safe Routes to School* workshop;
- Launching a week long *America on the Move* event;
- Serving on the City of Rye’s *Trailways Committee* to improve sidewalks and walking trails in Rye; and
- Hosting a *Building Healthier Communities* conference for local municipal and school officials.

For more information about the Mayor’s and Supervisor’s Community Health Challenge or National Public Health Week, visit the Health Department’s website at [www.westchestergov.com/health](http://www.westchestergov.com/health). To learn more about Westchester County’s Be Fit program, log onto [www.westchestergov.com/fitness](http://www.westchestergov.com/fitness).

### **Mayor’s and Supervisor’s Community Health Challenge Planned Activities\***

#### **Bedford**

Town officials will be publishing the first ever Town of Bedford Healthy Cookbook that will have recipes submitted by town employees and tips on healthy eating and living. The cookbook will be made available to the public at town offices. An employee luncheon will be held consisting of meals made using the cookbook’s healthy recipes.

#### **Briarcliff Manor**

The town is in the early stages of developing healthy lifestyle activities for residents.

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## Health Challenge Kick Off P.3

### **Cortlandt**

This spring the town will be opening up two new athletic fields - a little league baseball field and a soccer field. The town of Cortlandt offers a wide variety of health and fitness programs for residents: men's and women's softball and tennis leagues, as well as yoga, exercione, running, jogging and walking programs. There are also a wide variety of youth sports and clinics for soccer, football, basketball, girls' softball and roller hockey. A brochure promoting these programs will be published this spring.

### **Croton-on-Hudson**

To encourage residents to participate in physical activities, the village will be holding a river walk on the "River Front Trail" on May 5 starting at 1:00 p.m.

### **Elmsford**

The village is sprucing up the South County Trailway, which starts in Elmsford Village and will be promoting "Meet Your Neighbor on the Trail Day," which will be held in April. There will also be an opening day ceremony this spring for a reconstructed tennis court for residents.

### **Greenburgh**

The town is in the early stages of developing healthy lifestyle activities for residents.

### **Lewisboro**

The town will be promoting healthy living for adults, teens and children through its Earth Day activities on April 21 which will include nature walks. The town will also offer its residents karate and yoga classes and will begin the senior center meetings with a 10-minute exercise program.

### **Mamaroneck Town**

The town will identify and promote bicycle routes that can be used by residents. The town is also partnering with neighboring communities on a scenic trail and is busy preparing for a Wellness Fair for employees that will be held next fall.

### **Mamaroneck Village**

The village is in the early stages of developing healthy lifestyle activities for residents.

### **New Rochelle**

The city is in the preliminary stages of developing a cycling program to make New Rochelle more bicycle friendly and encourage residents to ride their bikes rather than drive their cars. The city will also be partnering with neighboring communities to create a scenic neighborhood trail.

### **North Castle**

On April 21, the town supervisor will celebrate Earth Day by leading a hike for residents at Cranberry Lake Preserve.

### **North Salem**

The town recently completed new baseball and soccer fields, a basketball court and a children's playground at Volunteer Park on Route 124. The town will host games and activities on these fields to encourage healthy living and will promote the use of the Purdys Ridge Hiking Trail which has been marked by a local Boy Scout troop.

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**Health Challenge Kick Off P.4**

### **Ossining**

The village and town are designating Friday, May 4, 2007 as Ossining School/Community Walk Day. Ossining will be holding healthy living events at two of its schools - Claremont and Anne M. Dorner Middle School - and are encouraging all students to walk to school that day. Students who ride the bus will be dropped off at staging areas away from the front of their school building so that they too have the opportunity to “walk to school.”

### **Pelham Manor**

The village is collaborating with parents and local schools to develop a Safe Route Walk to School program. Maps of safe walking routes will be developed and distributed and the village will assist with painting crosswalks and traffic control if needed near participating schools.

### **Pound Ridge**

Pound Ridge is working to get approval from the town board to give town employees an extra half an hour at lunch time to use the bike path in front of the town building. The town will also be meeting with officials to secure funding to install fit stations on the bike path for residents. Easy to implement fitness tips are being made available to town employees and consideration is being given to moving employee parking farther away from the office to promote walking.

### **Rye City**

The city has instituted a Trailway and Traffic Safety Project to improve trailways, sidewalks, and safe walking options in the community. A Trailways Group has been formed which brings together advocates for improving routes for walking to school as well as recreation and nature trail supporters. The effort is identifying existing gaps in walking paths, seeking outside funding options, and addressing other pedestrian safety issues around the schools. This initiative is part of the Rye YMCA's Activate America Program which is working with Sound Shore communities to promote healthier lifestyles including encouraging communities to take steps to make it safer to walk, jog, and exercise.

### **Scarsdale**

Last year, the village established a Wellness Committee to promote wellness education and provide wellness opportunities for village employees. Through this initiative, after-work yoga, lunch presentations on healthy living and a weight-loss promotion program have been offered to village employees. This spring, the village will continue its brown bag lunch presentations and will be offering an after-work weight training class for employees.

### **Yorktown**

The town supervisor will be mailing a letter included in the town's Parks and Recreation brochure to residents describing the County Executive's Community Health Challenge and encouraging residents to walk, run, swim, skate, or play ball at Yorktown facilities. Residents will be invited to join the town supervisor for a hike on Turkey Mountain on June 3 at 2:00 p.m. and will be encouraged to participate in other upcoming walking programs throughout the town. The town supervisor encourages all Yorktown residents to be active and leads by example as a member of the “Westchester Wildcats” women's ice hockey team.

*\*as of March 30, 2007*